

LIVING ORTHODOXY



VISIT TO HAÏTI

Also in this issue...

St. Basil the Blessed, Fool for Christ of Moscow

Sunday of Orthodoxy: St. Philaret of New York

A Concerned Voice: Monk Theophan

Akathist Hymn to the Akhityrka Icon of the Mother of God

Why Christianity Should not Change with the Times:

St. Theophan the Recluse

After a Visit to a Monastery

St. Pimen the Great

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LIVING ORTHODOXY

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The wise Solomon says in the Proverbs: "They that have no guidance fall like leaves; but in much counsel there is safety" [Prov 11:14]. So you see what the Holy Scriptures teach us? They enjoin us not to rely on ourselves, not to regard ourselves as knowing all, not to believe that we can control ourselves, for we need help, and are in need of those who would counsel us according to God. No men are more unfortunate or nearer perdition than those who have no teachers on the way of God. For what does it mean that where no guidance is, people fall like leaves? A leaf is at first green, flourishing, beautiful; then it gradually withers, falls, and is finally trampled underfoot. So it is with a man who has no guide: at first he is always zealous in fasting, vigil, silence, obedience and other virtues; then his zeal little by little cools down and, having no one to instruct, support and fire him with zeal, he insensibly withers, and finally becomes a slave of the enemies, who do with him what they will. Of those who reveal their thoughts and actions and who do everything with counsel, the Wise One says, "in much counsel there is safety." He does not say "in the counsels of many," that is, in seeking counsel from everyone, but in seeking counsel in all things. For such a man, safety is assured "in much counsel." When we do not reveal our thoughts and intentions and do not seek the counsel of the experienced, we hold on to our own will and follow our own justifications. Then, apparently doing something good, we spread nets for ourselves, and so without realizing it we perish. For how can we understand the will of God or completely surrender ourselves to it, when we trust ourselves and cling to our own will? Thus Abba Pimen said that "our will is a brass wall between man and God."

— *Abba Dorotheus, 6th-7th cent.*
on Proverbs 11:1

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**SAINT BASIL THE BLESSED, FOOL FOR CHRIST'S SAKE,
WONDERWORKER OF MOSCOW
WHOM THE HOLY CHURCH COMMEMORATES ON THE 2ND OF AUGUST**

In the second half of the 15th century, during the reign of the blessed Emperor and Grand Duke Ivan Vasilievich III, when St. Macarius was Metropolitan of Moscow and All Russia, a son was born to the pious couple James and Anna, to whom they gave the name Basil. His parents had for a long time been childless. Like Zacharias and Elizabeth, it was only after long and fervent prayer that they were given a son who was truly a gift of God. From his very birth his special vocation was evident, for he took his mother's milk only from the right breast and never touched the left.

When he was sixteen years old, Basil left his parents' home and went to the crowded capital of Moscow. Ever standing before God in his mind and soul, in Moscow he literally followed Christ and "had nowhere to lay his head" (Lk 9:58). While living in a crowded city full of worldly cares and worries, St. Basil could say of himself, in the words of the Apostle: "Here we have no abiding city, but we seek the one to come" (Heb 13:14).

Having chosen an unusual place for his ascetic life, the saint also chose an unusual way to the heavenly Jerusalem. Guided by the Holy Spirit, he pretended to be mad and, for Christ's sake, lived the life of a vagrant. He chose a way of salvation in which his virtuous life was hidden under the guise of outward impropriety. This required extraordinary patience: on the one hand, hunger, thirst, cold, heat, and all the privations inevitable for a tramp's life; on the other, constant ridicule, abuse, and even blows. All this had to be borne without murmuring, generously, even joyfully for Christ's sake. What extraordinary self-denial and self-command are needed to rise above the demands of human nature and stifle the hidden cries of self-love, so as to devote oneself entirely to the service of God and the salvation of one's neighbor!

Scarcely covered with a shirt, blessed Basil went through the streets of Moscow patiently enduring every kind of inclemency of the elements. He had not even a tiny cave for himself, but was always without a roof, and went almost naked in all kinds of weather, always half starved, frozen with the frost in winter and scorched with the heat in summer. "If winter is cruel, Paradise is sweet," said the saint, and pointed to the example of the Forty Martyrs who, for the sake of the Kingdom of God, were frozen to death on the lake of Sebaste in sight of a hot bath. By living a supernatural life, he kept his



soul free from passions. Thou didst "shed corruptible garments and put on the vesture of dispassion," sings the holy Church (kontakion of the saint).

St. Basil's mind was continually engaged in prayer and meditation. His inner, spiritual eyes, were always turned towards God, and this was expressed outwardly by the fact that his head and eyes were always raised to heaven. "If you speak much you cannot avoid sin" (Prov 10:19). "He who guards his mouth protects his soul: but he who is rash with his tongue will come to grief" (Prov 13:3). He was guided by these

words of the Wise Man. He was as silent in the world as if he had been in a desert, and lived among men as if he were in a monastery.

Naturally, with such a mode of life he could have no close friends or intimate acquaintances. Only very occasionally did he enjoy the hospitality of a certain pious widow. Most of his time he spend in the streets and squares of Moscow among beggars and cripples, and in general among people whom popular opinion regards as wronged by fate. A large part of the night he spent in prayer, for which he went to the porches of Moscow's many churches. There, too, he occasionally allowed himself a short rest. Sometimes he went to the tower in the wall of Chinatown, by St. Barbara's Gate, where he also gave himself up to prayer in solitude. In memory of his visits, this place was formerly called Basil's meadow and Basil's garden. In this meadow there was at that time a prison for the correction of drunkards; he sometimes visited these despised places with the intention of saving the lost souls of the drunken addicts.

During the childhood of Ivan the Terrible, despotism reigned in society in all its stark horror, and the rich mercilessly oppressed the poor. And in the early years of John Vasilievitch, at the time of the boyars' revolt, blessed Basil's life was a living rebuke to the immoral people of the time, and a consolation to those who were innocently suffering from the arbitrary whims of wild passions. As a devoted son of his country, he wept bitterly for his contemporaries, and by his tears he brought many to repentance.

In 1521, during the reign of Basil Ivanovich III, shortly before the Tatar attack on the Russian Empire, St. Basil was once praying at night before the doors of the Cathedral of the Dormition (in the Kremlin). For a long time he prayed with tears to God, with a number of other pious people, for the deliverance of his fellow citizens from the threatening danger. An awful noise was heard in the church, a flame was seen darting about, and from the wonderworking icon of the Mother of God there came a voice convicting the inhabitants of Moscow of their sins. But the fervent, tearful prayer of "the fool" increased. Then the miraculous fire vanished and the noise stopped. The news of St. Basil's

miraculous vision soon spread through the city, and the people of Moscow anxiously awaited the dreadful calamity.

In a short time this terrible prediction was fulfilled. The Crimean and Kazan Tatars under the leadership of Mahomet-Chirey invaded Russia, sacked and burned one town after another, and burnt everything with which they met on their way. The suburbs of Moscow were destroyed by fire. The same fate threatened the capital itself, but Moscow was saved by the prayers of its great intercessors. The Tatars were terrified by a strange vision of a vast army of warriors on the fields of Moscow; they made a hasty retreat, and completely quit Russia. [To commemorate this miraculous deliverance from the Tatars, an annual procession from the Kremlin to the Monastery of the Presentation was established.]

However much he tried to hide his holy life under the mask of foolishness, blessed Basil could not do it, for "a city set on a hill cannot be hidden" (Matt 5:14). The fame of his pure life and great fortitude reached the ears of the Emperor Ivan Vasilievitch and Metropolitan Macarius of Moscow and All Russia. Both the emperor and the metropolitan were amazed at his patience and praised God Who in their time had raised up such a holy man. The Lord graciously willed to glorify St. Basil before the emperor through many miracles, so that after the example of the emperor all the people should pay him due honor. Thus it once happened that on the nameday of Ivan the Terrible, St. Basil was invited by the emperor to the palace. When he received the cup, he poured it three times out the window. This roused the emperor to anger. Seeing him angry, St. Basil said:

"Stop your anger and learn that by pouring out this drink I have extinguished the fire which now is consuming the whole city of Novgorod."

So saying, the fool hurriedly left the imperial palace. Some of the servants ran after him, but they could not catch him for, when he reached the Moscow River, he crossed it as if it had been dry land and disappeared.

Though the emperor regarded Basil as a holy man, he yet doubted what "the fool" had said of the fire in Novgorod. Nevertheless, he made a note of

the day and hour when Basil had visited him, and sent a messenger to Novgorod to check the saint's words. The inhabitants of the town told the messenger that during the fire they had seen a naked man with a pail putting out the fire, and it was that very day and hour when the fire went out. When the messenger returned and reported this, the emperor loved St. Basil yet more, and began to invite him more often to the palace.

Some time later, some citizens of Novgorod came to Moscow and recognized St. Basil as the man who had put out the fire. They seized him as he was running away from them at St. Barbara's Gate, and told this to the people. Those who heard glorified God, wonderful in His saints.

The idea came to Ivan the Terrible to build a palace on the Sparrow Hills. While the palace was being built, there happened to be a feast, and the emperor went to church. During the service, he was planning how to finish the building and how to decorate it. St. Basil came to that same church and, without being seen by the emperor, stood in a corner and saw what was passing in the emperor's mind. After the liturgy, the emperor went to his palace, followed by Basil. The emperor asked him, "Where have you been?" "There, where you were, at the holy liturgy," answered the "fool". "How is it that I did not see you?" "But I saw you," answered the saint, "and I saw where you truly were." "I've not been anywhere, only in church," said the emperor. "Your words are not true, O Tsar, for I saw you walking in thought on the Sparrow Hills and building your palace." And the emperor was smitten with compunction and said, "That is just what I was doing." And he began to respect and fear the saint more than ever.

By his strange acts, St. Basil taught his contemporaries to live a pious life and guided them to the way of Truth. More than one of the inhabitants of Moscow saw that as he passed through the streets he kissed the corners of some houses, while with a smile he threw stones at the corners of others. If the passers-by questioned him, he answered:

"I am driving away the devils which have no place in such a holy house, to prevent them from finding any shelter outside it either, on the corners.

And I am mentally thanking the master of the house that he does not admit them into his house."

But if someone saw him with tears in his eyes kissing the corners of a house and asked him why he did it, he answered: "Things unfit for Christians go on in this house. The Savior told us to pray unceasingly, so as not to fall into temptation and not take pleasure in vain works. For it is said in the Gospel, 'Woe to you who laugh now! (Lk 6:25). This house drives away its guardians, the angels who were appointed to attend us from holy baptism, for they do not tolerate such unworthy conduct. And that is why, not finding room in such houses, they sit at the corners, grieving and sorrowing. And I greet them with tears, while you think that I am kissing the corners. I begged them to save through their intercession the souls of the people to whom they were appointed by the Lord." Hearing such sensible talk from a supposed fool, many felt heartfelt compunction and thanked God for such a wonderful counselor.

Once Blessed Basil was passing through the market-place naked, where some young girls were selling their handiwork. Seeing the "fool", the girls laughed at his nakedness — and they all became blind. One of them, more sensible than the others, as soon as she felt she was losing her sight, hastened after Basil, begging him to stop. She fell at his feet in tears and asked for his forgiveness. Laughing, the saint said, "If you do not do this sort of thing again, you shall see." And she confirmed her promise with an oath. At the saint's command she stood up, he blew into her eyes, and she recovered her sight. Then she fell at his feet, thanking him and imploring him to go to the other blind girls and grant them the same favor. He went back to them and, following the instructions of the one who had been healed, they all fell at the feet of the wonderworker, beseeching him to restore their sight. He told them to stand up and then blew into the eyes of each one in turn, and they all received healing.

Though he was in general indulgent towards the weakness of his neighbors, yet sometimes Blessed Basil used his wonderworking powers for the punishment of flagrant injustice and shameless lying, and for the enlightenment of those who forgot God and violated their own consciences.



There was in Moscow a nobleman who loved him and whom he loved and whose house he sometimes visited. Once he came naked to see this nobleman on a bitterly cold day. The compassionate boyar asked him at least at such a time to protect his body from the frost. "Do you wish it?" asked the fool.

"With all my heart I wish you would put on my garment and cover your nakedness at this time." "All right, all right, my lord; do as you like. I love you," the saint said with a smile. The boyar put a coat of crimson cloth on Basil's shoulders and the saint, according to his custom, ran into the street.

Wicked men, seeing him in an expensive fur coat, plotted to get it from him by deceit. One lay down on the road and pretended to be dead, while his comrades begged Basil to give them something for the burial of a pauper. The saint, sighing over their wickedness and deceit, asked, "Is your comrade truly dead, and is it long since he died?" "Just now," they answered.

The saint took off his fur coat and covered the seemingly dead man with it, saying, "Be henceforth dead for ever for your wickedness, for the wicked shall be destroyed."

As soon as he had gone away, the comrades of the dead man began to rouse him, thinking that he had fallen asleep. But he never rose, for he really was dead.

"Lo! concerning him true witness is borne even by the enemy!" sings the holy Church, praising blessed Basil (Ode VI of the canon to the saint). Actually, the very enemies of Christ realized the wonderworking power of God through the saint's visible intercession for them. A Persian ship carrying many passengers was sailing in the Caspian Sea. A strong wind sprang up and the waves began to fill the vessel so that there was little hope of being saved. The ship was drifting, as the captain had lost his bearings in the storm. But besides Persians, there were on board the ship a few Orthodox Christians. In the hour of danger they remembered blessed Basil and said to the Persians who were voyaging with them, "We have in Russia, in Moscow, blessed Basil who walks on the waters, and whom the waves obey; he has great confidence in Christ our God and can save our sinking ship and deliver us."

Scarcely had they uttered the words when they saw a naked man standing on the waters, who took the helm and steered the ship through the heavy sea. A little later the waves calmed down and the wind dropped, and all were saved from the impending disaster. On returning to their country, the Persians told the khan about this miracle. The khan wrote of it to the Emperor Ivan Vasilievitch. When some of the rescued Persians went to Moscow on business, they met Basil the "fool" in the street and recognized him as the man who had saved them from shipwreck.

Once blessed Basil came to an inn, where the innkeeper was an evil man who served the wine using strong language and frequently repeating the name of the devil. St. Basil stood at the door and looked sorrowfully at those who had come to drink. After him there came a drunkard already unsteady on his legs, who asked the innkeeper to give him wine for money quickly. But the man, in a fit of anger, shouted at him: "The devil take you, you drunkard. You prevent me from serving wine to better men than you!"

Hearing such words, the newcomer shielded himself with the sign of the cross as he took the wine from the innkeeper. Blessed Basil, as if playing the fool, laughed loudly and clapped his hands, saying: "Well done, well done! Always do that to save yourself from the invisible enemy."

Those who were in the inn asked him why he was laughing. The "fool" sensibly answered them: "When the innkeeper invoked the name of the evil one, the devil entered the tankard at his word. But when the man who wanted a drink shielded himself with the sign of the cross, the demon went out of the tankard and fled from the inn, and I laughed in great delight. And I praise those who remember Christ our Savior and make the sign of the cross on themselves in all their endeavors, for this wards off all the evil powers."

In 1552 St. Basil's long and difficult struggle came to an end. Not long before his death, he fell ill and lay in bed. The news of his illness quickly spread through Moscow and reached the emperor. The emperor and empress, with their two sons John and Theodore, went to see the saint and ask for his prayers. As he lay dying, he said prophetically to the young Prince Theodore, who was the younger of the two sons: "All the inheritance of your ancestors will be yours and you will be the heir."

An extraordinary joy lit up the face of the saint, for he was contemplating a vision of angels coming to take him. In a kind of ecstasy he surrendered his spirit into the hands of God. The whole city was filled with the fragrance of his body. Huge crowds flocked to see his burial. It was a touching sight. The emperor and the princes carried his body into the church on their shoulders. The metropolitan, the bishop, and many priests with their attendants sang psalms and hymns. The people cried out with tears to blessed Basil to pray for them. Many, simply by touching his relics, were healed.

Thus the relics of blessed Basil were committed to earth with great honor. The holy ascetic did not live to see the dreadful executions which took place under Ivan the Terrible. He passed to a happy eternity on the 2nd of August 1552, being 88 years of age and having lived as a "fool" in Moscow for 72 years. His body was buried in the cemetery of Holy Trinity Church where, in 1554 by order of Ivan the

Terrible, a cathedral was built dedicated to the Protection of the Mother of God, to commemorate the conquest of Kazan.

The original icon of St. Basil depicts him as old, with white hair curling at the ears, and a short and curly white beard. He is completely naked and holds a handkerchief in his hand.

The memory of his heroic life and glorious deeds did not end with his death; his fame only increased. Innumerable miracles took place at his tomb. Not only were the people of Moscow who came with faith to the place of his burial healed of their spiritual and bodily diseases, but the glorious name of this holy man became known in the most distant parts of the Russian Empire. Many of the sick whom the physicians were unable to cure were instructed in dreams to have recourse to the prayers of St. Basil and, in spite of their bodily weakness, undertook the difficult journey to the capital where, according to their faith, and after fervent prayer to the saint, they received healing.

At last the time came when, according to the providence of God, the name of blessed Basil, written in the Church of the firstborn in heaven, was also to be glorified by the Church on earth. Thirty-six years after his death, during the reign of Theodore Ivanovitch, and at the time of Patriarch Job, God confirmed by many miracles the holiness of His servant.

On the very anniversary of his death, amid a great concourse of people, more than 120 sick people suddenly received healing. The emperor and the patriarch regarded this with undoubting faith as a wonderful sign from God. They gave glory to God Who had been pleased to raise up a righteous man in their times. Then and there (1588) they ordered that a chapel should be built in his honor over the tomb of the saint, at the Cathedral of the Protection. [Later, the whole cathedral came to be known as the Cathedral of Basil the Blessed.]

At the same time, a silver shrine was erected over his relics, and it was ordered that he should be commemorated on the day of his repose, August 2nd. Here are a few of the many miracles which were wrought in response to the prayers of the faithful at the holy relics of the saint after his blessed repose.

Xenia, the widow of a deceased priest, could see nothing with one eye for ten years. At last, the other eye also became diseased. She had heard of the miracles of blessed Basil and often prayed at the tomb of this servant of God, but obtained no cure. Once, St. Basil appeared to her in a dream and said, "Woman, rise; go to my tomb and God will heal you." On the day of his commemoration, she went to his tomb and fell down in fervent prayer before his relics, and her prayer was heard. After a *molieben*, her eyes were opened and became bright and well, as if they had never been diseased.

In a suburb of Moscow, a certain Tatiana lost her sight and was blind for a whole year. She had heard of the wonderful cures which the Lord granted through His Saint Basil, and often went to pray at his tomb. Once, on returning home, she went to sleep and saw in a dream a saintly-looking man, who said to her: "I saw you many times at my tomb, but the time for healing you had not yet come. If you want to be well, go to the Lifegiving Trinity and to the Most Holy Mother of God, kiss the tomb of blessed Basil, and God will heal you." The blind woman replied: "I earnestly wish to receive health, but I do not know how." And again she heard a voice: "Only have confidence, and your faith will save you." Awaking in fear and joy, she felt herself cured and told her husband of the vision. Both hastened to the cathedral to have a thanksgiving *molieben* sung, and told the clergy of the cure.

A certain beggar named Joseph, who lived in Moscow, used to wander in the Pokrovsky street and beg for alms. He had been dumb from birth and was sometimes possessed by an evil spirit. At such times he became dangerous. He was dragged by sheer force to the saint's tomb to kiss his relics. As soon as a *molieben* had been sung and he had been sprinkled with holy water, his tongue was loosed and he became whole and sane.

A monk named Gerasimus had been a cripple for twelve years, having lost the use of his legs. He lived on alms, sitting at the Savior's Gate. Once, blessed Basil appeared to him and asked: "Old man, how many years have you been crawling on your knees?" "For twelve years," answered the poor man, "and all I had I have given to the physicians, but without the slightest benefit." "But why do you

not believe in the saints, from whom you can obtain healing without payment?" "I believe, O Lord," said the poor man; "I believe," he added, "that by your prayers God will have mercy on me." "All right," said his visitor; "then go to the tomb of Basil the Fool, and you will receive healing." Gerasimus went, bowed down before the tomb, and was completely healed.

The son of a boyar in Vologda, Basil Sergueyev Kopyatov, suffered for a whole year from his legs. Hearing of the numerous miracles received through the relics of blessed Basil, the sick man wondered how he could reach St. Basil's tomb, so as to pray there for his healing. Strong in faith but weak in body, he started out on the long journey from Vologda to Moscow on crutches. On the way he took ill and was obliged to rest. In grief and desperation, he turned in prayer to the wonderworker, saying: "Help me and deliver me from this sickness!" As soon as he had cried out for help to blessed Basil, he heard a voice saying: "If you want to receive healing, go and kiss my tomb." At the same moment, the sick man felt himself healed and continued his journey to Moscow, where he kissed the shrine of blessed Basil with tears.

A rich woman named Anna had been blind for twelve years. Having heard of the miracles which were worked through the prayers of blessed Basil and firmly believing in him, she ordered an icon of the servant of God to be painted and offered it to the church dedicated to him. After praying for many days in this church, she received healing and regained her sight.

On the day of the commemoration of the saint, when the emperor and patriarch were present in the Church of St. Basil, a woman called Agrippina, who had been blind for three years, stood on the porch and could not kiss the holy relics. "Alas for me, a poor pilgrim," she cried. "I cannot obtain the grace to venerate thy precious relics." When the emperor and patriarch had left the church, someone took pity on the blind woman and led her to the holy relics. As soon as she had kissed the tomb of the saint, she at once received healing.

A few days later Lukian, from the village of Yaropoltz, who had been suffering for two years from a malady of the eyes, came to worship at the

tomb of blessed Basil and remained there all night in prayer. At dawn, after matins, when they began to sing a molieben to the saint, he felt some relief. At the reading of the holy Gospel he completely recovered his sight.

The nun Martha from Rostov, whose whole head was covered with sores and whose eyes were infected and running, on the advice of compassionate and kind neighbors, decided to go to the tomb of blessed Basil and pray at his holy relics. But the ready helper in our sorrows, blessed Basil, mercifully healed the nun while she was still on her way. So, too, another woman from Kolomna, Anna, who had been suffering for seven years from a disease of the heart, set out in order to venerate the saint in fulfillment of a vow, and was healed of her illness halfway to Moscow.

Near Moscow lived a poor woman, Euphemia, who suffered from an eye disease. She had also been possessed by an unclean spirit for thirty-five years. She deeply grieved over her miserable state. Once, in a dream she saw blessed Basil saying to her: "If you want to be well, go to my tomb and the Lord will heal you." She replied, "I have nothing to offer as a gift, and I am ashamed to go." But the saint said, "If you believe, you will be healed, for it is not for the sake of reward that the various cures occur." So saying, the saint disappeared. Filled with fear and joy, the woman awoke from her sleep and set out on her journey. On her way, she met a pilgrim who gave her a silver coin. With ardent faith she reached Moscow and went to the Church of St. Basil, where a crowd of people had come to get spiritual and bodily healing at his holy shrine. There the poor woman found healing. After being sprinkled with holy water, she was freed from her dreadful disease.

Eudoxia, a woman who lived not far from Moscow, cherished a profound respect for St. Basil, and made a vow to have a molieben sung at his tomb. But with the negligence and procrastination so common among worldly people, she put off from day to day the fulfillment of her vow, and almost forgot about it. Once in the morning, as she was going out to her work, she was met by a blast as of a hurricane and suddenly felt as if her limbs were paralyzed. Feeling ill, she understood the cause of

it, that it had happened because of her neglecting her vow. She asked her relatives to take her to the tomb of the saint where, after fervent prayer, her health was restored.

The farm laborer Cosmo from the village of Pokrovsky had been suffering from an eye disease for seven and a half years. He could see nothing with his left eye. So he went to Moscow to pray for deliverance from the disease at the relics of blessed Basil. On his way he stopped for the night at the house of a peasant named Eutropius. In a dream, the saint appeared to him and said sternly: "Fool, why did you not ask me before for healing?" And, blowing into his eye, he vanished. When he woke up, Cosmo found he could see perfectly. He then continued his journey to Moscow, where at the relics of the saint he thanked God and His servant for his gracious cure.

A woman named Xenia, possessed by an evil spirit, began to drink something on a feast day before dinner; suddenly she became dumb and lost reason. She began to tear her clothes and to rave, so that they were obliged to bind her. Her relatives remembered the miracles of blessed Basil and brought her to the tomb of the holy servant of God. After a molieben and sprinkling with holy water, the woman was healed.

A certain Eustratius had been suffering from fever for four years. Wishing to be delivered from his illness, he came to the Church of St. Basil and prayed to the holy servant of God for healing. Having prayed there, he returned home. The following night he saw blessed Basil in a dream, and a certain evil-looking woman who tried to seize him. But the saint said to her: "Do not touch him!" and she instantly disappeared. When the sick man awoke, he found himself completely healed.

Agrippina, an unmarried woman, had been suffering for four years from paralysis in all her limbs. During her illness she often mentally turned in prayer to blessed Basil. She was carried on a stretcher to his relics and, after fervent prayer, was healed. She fell down at the tomb of the saint with happy tears of gratitude and told everyone about the miracle, saying: "Yesterday, I could not move so much as a finger, and today I shall walk from the tomb of the saint!" And she returned home, rejoicing.

The patriarch's cook, Theodore, had been suffering for two years from headaches and deafness. One night he remembered the miracles of blessed Basil and, after prayer to the saint, went to sleep. In his sleep he saw the saint himself standing by his tomb and, with him, two unknown holy-looking men. St. Basil said to the sick man: "Why are you so sad about your illness? Pray to those present here and you will be healed." The vision ended, and the sick man recovered.

A certain Theodore from the town of Staritsa had been suffering for four years from fever. In spite of all kinds of treatment, the illness persisted, and he turned in prayer to blessed Basil. After one of his fervent prayers to the saint, a certain man appeared to him in his sleep, saying: "If you want to see St. Basil, follow me." On waking, he wondered at the vision. Then he went to the saint's tomb, where he received healing.

"Our fathers have handed down to us many other miracles," says the chronicler, "which fill our hearts with fervent faith in this blessed follower of the ancient servants of God, and we also cry to him with ardent faith in the words of the Church: 'Most blessed Basil! From thy youth thou didst endeavor to stand at the day of judgment without fear or terror; and by courageously renouncing all bodily pleasures, thou didst follow Christ. Thou didst gather spiritual riches with toil and patience with thy lamp always burning, and didst mount to heaven, rejoicing. Pray that our souls may be saved.'"

"As a true and invincible sufferer, thou wast pure in body and soul, having for Christ's sake exhausted thy body with every kind of privation. And therefore thou hast received from Him the gift of healing. And now, O blessed Basil, pray for us who glorify thy falling asleep."

TROPARION, TONE VIII

Thy manner of life true and thy purity undefiled, O Basil, for the sake of Christ thou didst lay waste to thy body by fasting and vigils, by frigid cold and the heat of the sun, and by the deep shadow and rain of clouds: and thy face shone with light like the sun. And now all the nations and peoples of Russia come to thee, glorifying thy holy repose. Wherefore, entreat Christ God, that He deliver us from captivity to barbarians and from civil strife, and that He grant peace to the world and great mercy to our souls.

KONTAKION, TONE IV

Led by the Spirit of God, O all-blessed Basil, thou didst shake off the tumult of the world and despise the turmoils of life; and having shed corruptible garments and put on the vesture of dispassion, thou didst escape the pursuit of the lying prince of this world; thou becamest a stranger in thy speech, and, choosing heavenly riches over earthly wealth, hast been crowned with the wreath of patience. And now, O all-blessed Basil, entreat Christ God in behalf of those who keep thy holy memorial, that we may cry out to thee: Rejoice, O all-blessed Basil!

God is well pleased at repaying us what He owes; and He both looks with a more favorable eye on those who have lent to Him than on those who have not, and He loves those the most to whom He owes the most. And so, if you desire to have Him as your Friend continually, make Him your Debtor to a large amount. For there is no lender so pleased at having those who owe to him, as Christ rejoices at having those who lend to Him. And those to whom He owes nothing He flees from, but He even runs to those to whom He is in debt. Let us then use all means to get Him for our Debtor, for this is the season for loans, and He is now in want.

If then you give not unto Him now, He will not ask of you after your departing from here. For it is here that He is athirst, here that He is hungry. Since He is thirsty when He thirsts after your salvation; and it is for this that He even begs, for this that He even goes about naked, negotiating immortal life for you. Do not then neglect Him, since it is not to be nourished that He wishes, but to nourish; it is not to be clothed, but to clothe, and to invest you with the golden garment, the royal robe.

—*St. John Chrysostom*
Homily 7 on the Epistle to the Romans

SUNDAY OF ORTHODOXY

St. Philaret of New York

February 27, 1972

Yesterday, at the all-night vigil, brethren, we spoke of the difficulties which the Orthodox Church went through on its path in ancient times, when first there was the era of persecutions, and after it, the era of heresies. But these things happened, and passed; and now are far from us.

Let us look around us and see in what circumstances the Church and true Orthodoxy are now. There were heresies in the ancient past, but there was not what we have so much of now: spiritual counterfeits, spiritual fakery, enticements to substitute the true Church and true Orthodoxy with a false church, or in any case, false-Orthodoxy (distorted Orthodoxy).

You yourselves know how nowadays the disease of so-called ecumenism is flooding the world, the platform of which all those who have a pliable back and pliable conscience are willingly assuming; this platform is comfortable! They say: "We all want to unite into one. We recognize that each church, each religion possesses its own extent of truth, and we want to join these degrees of truth into one, so that one whole — a new true Church should result."

This means, as I have already said before, that our Russian Orthodox Church is expected to also agree that it does not possess the fullness of the truth of Christ, but only a small portion of it, while the entire remainder is falsehood and error. What would the venerable St. Seraphim of Sarov or the holy Righteous St. John of Kronstadt say if we were to tell them such a thing?

Our Orthodox Church has the truth and stands firmly in the Truth, and will never depart from the Truth. We — are merely weak people, and servants of the Church and its rank and file children; each one of us sins, stumbles, but nevertheless, because we are in the Church, we possess the Truth, through the great mercy of God — and we will never agree that this is not Truth in its entirety but merely a part of it.

From this temptation arises another; principled unfaithfulness always produces unfaithfulness in practice. Take now for example the so-called

modernism, which in our days is wedging itself everywhere into church life. Can it be possible that we do not see how our divine services are being distorted and made empty beyond recognition, and how in general this applies to our entire Church life? We see how holy traditions, including not just ancient, patristic ones, but our Russian Orthodox ones as well are being called something antiquated, which one most no longer consider. You yourselves remember well how much disturbance and temptation there was when those here in America, who at one time had split away from the Church Abroad, and through whom we had hoped that finally the desired return and reunification would occur, declared themselves to be the so-called "autocephaly". It is understandable that certain parishes with their spiritual leaders left them; and most recently one of their hierarchs left the autocephaly who today prays and serves here — His Eminence Archbishop Ambrose (*see below*). He saw what this red autocephaly was becoming and by coming over to us he bore witness that the archpastoral conscience of a Russian Orthodox hierarch would never reconcile with this criminal venture.

But it is sad that the reaction to the red autocephaly is far from what it should be. It would have seemed that parishes and Russian Orthodox people should have departed *en masse* from this disease. But for now we do not see this. Only an insignificant portion has departed. And this indicates how difficult it is becoming now to defend Orthodoxy, and how difficult the path of the Church Abroad is becoming, for she has made it her sacred goal to preserve all patristic traditions and the fine Orthodox traditions of our Russian Orthodox Church.

Of course, we know well that where there is Truth, there God is, and that if we strive to preserve faithfulness to the fullness of the Truth, the Lord will not forget or forsake us.

But I would like to repeat what has already been necessary to say more than once, but must again be repeated because in the first place this is forgotten, and secondly, because many have not heard this before, they ask these questions: how is it that the

Orthodox Church, during the Sunday of Orthodoxy, curses those who have gone astray, who have departed from Orthodoxy and from the Church, and why does she curse them? This is too severe; this is too cruel!

May it be known to each one, that the Church never cursed anyone. The word “curse” is a terrifying word. And from the Holy Gospel we know of only one indication when this terrifying word will be uttered by the One Who alone can utter it — when at the Dread Judgment, the fearsome Judge will say to those who were unfaithful to Him: “Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.”

He alone can say this, but we do not curse anyone. The anathema proclaimed by the Church, is in no way a curse; it is not the invocation of the severe punishment and wrath of God upon any person, but only an excommunication from the Church; the excommunication from Her of that person who in fact has *already ceased to exist within Her fold*. Within the Church, Her members are those who are faithful to Her.

Last night we quoted the words of the Savior: “Who does not obey the Church, is the same as a pagan and publican,” in other words, one who had already ceased being a Christian. It is such persons about whom the Church announces that they have cut themselves off from connection to the Church,

and have ceased obeying Her maternal voice. And this is stated not only to inform others, so that they should know, but also for the benefit of those very persons being excommunicated. The Church hopes that this terrible warning will at least have an effect on them — that they will shudder when they hear the judgment the Church has rendered upon them for their error, and they will come to their senses.

Once the Apostle Paul wrote to the Galatian Christians of how, after him, false teachers had penetrated their midst, attempting to lead them off track, teaching them things other than those taught by him. Indicating this to the Galatians, Apostle Paul says: “But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, *let him be anathema*.” That is what the Apostle said — and after that he again repeated, “let him be anathema.” And this is why the Church proclaims anathema.

But remember that the proclamation of an anathema is combined in the service of the Sunday of Orthodoxy with the moving prayers to the Lord, that the Lord Himself would enlighten those gone astray. The Church is forced to say that they are anathema, that is apostates, and that they are excommunicated from the Church, but She grieves over them and prays for them, so that the Lord would help them come to their senses and return into the bosom of the Mother Church. Amen.

AN EARLIER FALSE UNION: A VOICE FROM THE PAST

DECLARATION OF HIS EMINENCE ARCHBISHOP AMVROSSY

formerly of Pittsburgh and West Virginia

Duty requires that I address this word to the Russian Orthodox clergy and laity of North America. It is likely that many have surmised the reasons which compelled me to renounce my membership in the episcopacy of the Orthodox Church of America (Metropolia) and my subsequent request that I be accepted in the ranks of the hierarchy of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia.

I arrived in America in 1923 from Russia, seized by godless power, after a bloody civil war, in which I took part with the White Army in the south of Russia. I have lived in America for fifty years, became an American citizen, and have grown to love this great land.

From the date of my arrival here, I have dedicated myself to the service of God, first as a deacon to Archbishop Vitaly of blessed memory in his cathedral in Bronx, New York, and later, as a priest, ordained and assigned by the late Metropolitan Theophilos during those blessed days of peace and growth when the North American Metropolitan District was a part of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia.

Within three years of my wife's death in 1950, I took monastic vows and, in 1955, was consecrated as a bishop and assigned to head the Diocese of Alaska of the Metropolia. After fifteen years of service there, I was sent to Japan, where I remained

for seven months, retaining my designation as head of the Alaskan diocese. In 1967, I became ruling archbishop of the Diocese of Pittsburgh and West Virginia, the largest diocese in the Metropolia.

During the fifty years of my life and service in America, I became acquainted with and grew to love many of the clergy and faithful who were able to preserve the priceless heritage of the Russian Orthodox Church, with its magnificent traditions and rituals. Because of this affection for so many good people, of late I accepted much which, under different circumstances, I would not otherwise have tolerated.

But alas, two years ago, the leadership of the American Metropolia, in haste and intemperance, entered into agreement with the Moscow Patriarchate through its representative, Metropolitan Nikodim — concerning the granting of autocephaly to the former.

We were tempted by the promise of complete freedom from Moscow and a union of all Orthodox Churches in America into one independent Church. With trepidation in my heart, I participated in these arrangements, not wishing to induce internal dissensions within the ranks of the Metropolia which could have been exploited to the detriment of the Church by her enemies. One hoped that all would end well. Unfortunately, on the contrary, all which we were cautioned against has come to pass. Receiving autocephaly from Moscow has created new ties between the Metropolia and Moscow, with the result that Moscow's influence has deepened in Church life here.

Not one other Church, free from the domination of Moscow, has recognized this "autocephaly" and, contrary to all our expectations, the Moscow Patriarchate has strengthened its power here through their 45 parishes in America even though, according to our original understandings, these parishes were to be released to the Metropolia. Again, in violation of all understandings and agreements, Moscow has assigned a new bishop to this country — Makary of Uman. Trips to Moscow, endless concelebrations, exchanges of gifts — all against the wishes of many of the bishops and clergy of the Metropolia — gradually led to a rapprochement with those Moscow hierarchs who we all know are subordinated to the enemies of the Church.

All of this has called forth great grief in me. With each passing day, I saw more clearly my duty before God and man. To those events have been added yet another grave danger — the philosophy of "mod-

ernism", which has been relentlessly introduced into parish life here.

Orthodox Christian life is based upon man's ability to cope with his passivity and the influences of a world of evil and temptation. Modernism, on the contrary, is based upon a lowering of spiritual standards in the name of accommodation to this world. Of late in the Metropolia, there has been a particularly intensive attack on the use of the Church Slavonic language during services, the shortening and elimination of many of these services, the introduction of the Gregorian (papal) calendar into Church life, the granting of mass confessions, and the giving of Communion without Confession.

When I spoke of these things at the last Council of Bishops' meeting that I attended, my observations brought forth such a violent reaction that it became clear I could no longer endure and be responsible for this new direction in Church life. For these reasons, I was compelled to beseech His Eminence Metropolitan Philaret that he accept me as a member of the hierarchy of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia, the true witness to the legacy of the martyred Patriarch Tikhon.

My decision has brought me no material gain; on the contrary, I shall lose. Of course, this is not important when one realizes that I am again privileged to serve that Church which is the keeper of Orthodox purity and holy Russian Church order. I am eternally grateful to His Eminence Metropolitan Philaret and the members of the Synod of Bishops for the love and understanding with which I was met.

I have written these lines in fulfillment of my priestly duty before God, my flock, this great country and all the good it has brought me, and before all-suffering Russia, where I received the great gift of life and the Holy Orthodox Church.

† Archbishop Amvrossy (Merezhko)

29 February/ 13 March 1972

New York, New York

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Archbishop Amvrossy was born near Kiev in 1889 and grew up in the Kiev Caves Lavra. After his reception into the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia he served at the Synodal cathedral in New York and in various parishes. In 1973 he went to live at Holy Transfiguration Monastery in Brookline MA (then under the jurisdiction of ROCOR), where he reposed in 1974, and was buried in the monastic cemetery at Holy Trinity Monastery in Jordanville, NY. Memory eternal!

**AKATHIST HYMN TO THE ALL-HOLY THEOTOKOS,
CHANTED BEFORE HER MIRACULOUS AKHTYRKA ICON
WHICH THE HOLY CHURCH DOTH COMMEMORATE ON THE 2ND OF JULY**

Three years after the day of the transposition of the icon to the house, on the day of the Protection of the Most-Holy Mother of God, a priest entered the room where the icon was, and was struck by the unusual light emanating from it; this phenomenon began to occur over and over, but the priest piously prayed and spoke to no one of it. As soon as he fell into a light sleep, the priest saw the Mother of God and heard her instructions: to clear the icon of dust and wash it with clean water. The priest, waking from his slumber, immediately went to fulfill the will of the Mother of God, cleaning it of dust, washing it with pure water; he gathered the water into a basin to pour it into the river the following day. Afterwards, he fell asleep again, and saw in his dream that he was approaching the river with the basin of water with which he had cleaned the icon, but on the way, he heard the voice of the Mother of God: "Return home and keep this water; it will heal all those suffering from fever." The priest had a daughter who had for a long time suffered from fever; awakening, he gave her this water to drink, and the daughter was instantly cured. After that, all who suffered from fever would come to this icon in prayer and would be healed." The priest put the icon into Holy Protection Church. As Bishop (later Metropolitan) Philaret writes: "In the church, wondrous healings of various sick people flowed

from the holy icon, and its glory spread to faraway places." (As is always the case in such instances, the Church was obligated to conduct an "investigation" of the miracles of the holy icon, since groundless faith or deceit in this matter could bring the truth more damage than even stubborn disbelief. The investigation lasted for eight years, and since the "historical veracity of the miraculous occurrences proved to be indubitable, both by their circumstances and by the variety of miraculous events," the Holy Synod in 1751 recognized the Akhtyrka Icon of the Mother of God as miracle-working.) In 1753, on the site of the appearance of the miracle-working icon, at the order of Empress Elizabeth, a new Church of the Protection was built of stone. During the revolution, the icon disappeared, but later turned up mysteriously in Harbin and was acquired by S.A. Stepanov. According to Protopriest N. Trufanov of Harbin, who had often venerated the icon in Akhtyrka, the one acquired by Stepanov was that same miracle-working Icon of Akhtyrka. In the 1950's, S. Stepanov took the Icon to Brazil, and then to San Francisco, where he handed it over to the Committee of Russian Orthodox Youth as a blessing. At the present time the icon is venerated in the house-chapel at the episcopal residence of the Australian and New Zealand Diocese of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia (Moscow Patriarchate).

KONTAKION I

Let us give utterance unto hymns of praise for the Mother of God and Queen, who hath all-wondrously revealed her healing icon; and, beholding her thereon standing by the Cross of Christ, let us say: O most merciful Lady, as thou art possessed of ineffable lovingkindness, by thy fervent intercession and aid free from all misfortunes and ailments us who cry out to thee in compunction: Rejoice, O thou who art full of grace and prayest unceasingly to Christ for us!

IKOS I

O Queen of the angels and Mistress of all creation, all-pure Virgin Theotokos, when thou didst stand by the Cross of thy beloved Son, beholding the sufferings which He endured for our sake, the sword of sorrow truly pierced thy soul. And gazing upon thee standing most painfully by the Cross, which is depicted upon this icon, we make bold to cry out to thee thus:

Rejoice, all-comely Bride of the unoriginate Father;

rejoice, Mother unwedded of the preëternal Son!
 Rejoice, immaculate palace of the Holy Spirit;
 rejoice, divine initiate of the mysteries of the life-creating Trinity!
 Rejoice, amazement of the angelic armies;
 rejoice, uplifting of the human race!
 Rejoice, thou who art hymned by the cherubim;
 rejoice, thou whom the seraphim glorify aloud!
 Rejoice, thou who in the incorrupt birth of thy Son didst receive ineffable joy;
 rejoice, thou who didst endure great sorrow at His death on the Cross!
 Rejoice, thou who hast received from Him the grace to comfort the sorrowful;
 rejoice, thou who hast given the joy of thy loving aid unto all the world!
 Rejoice, O thou who art full of grace and prayest unceasingly to Christ for us!

KONTAKION II

Seeing thee standing by His Cross and suffering painfully with Him, O pure Theotokos, thy Son and God, Who was nailed to the Cross, assigned thee as mother to His beloved disciple John and thus made the whole human race thy children by adoption, that thou mightest truly be a mother to all the sorrowful, who call upon thy Son, Christ God, and chant unto Him: Alleluia!

IKOS II

The God-slaying Jews did not comprehend the incomprehensible reason for the voluntary suffering of Christ, O Bride of God, and cruelly deprived thee of thy Child; but we, seeing thee depicted on this icon, standing by the Cross of thy Son and Lord, fervently believe that thou dost accept the sorrowful cries of those who pray to thee. Wherefore, we say with thanksgiving:

Rejoice, Mother given us by Christ our Savior;
 rejoice, thou who didst adopt us all at the grievous hour of His sufferings!
 Rejoice, thou who in thy maternal love dost not leave us orphaned and helpless;
 rejoice, thou who dost incline the ear of thy lovingkindness unto us!

Rejoice, thou who didst bravely bear the cross of sorrowful trials;
 rejoice, thou who in thy compassion dost lighten for us the burden thereof!
 Rejoice, our sure hope and consolation amid this earthly vale of sorrows;
 rejoice, joy and defense of all the faithful in the age to come!
 Rejoice, thou who by the fear of death and the judgment of God dost goad sleeping consciences;
 rejoice, thou who dost lead to saving repentance those who slumber in sins!
 Rejoice, thou who dost rescue the desperate from the pit of destruction;
 rejoice, thou who dost lead those who labor up into the splendid abodes of rest everlasting!
 Rejoice, O thou who art full of grace and prayest unceasingly to Christ for us!

KONTAKION III

Thou dost never cease to save us by the divine power revealed through thy holy icons, O Mistress most good; thus also, in the Ukrainian town of Akhtyrka, thou hast shown forth great miracles through the radiant manifestation of thy healing image, before which we bow down with love, crying out to Christ God: Alleluia!

IKOS III

Possessed of maternal care for the people redeemed by the precious Blood of thy Son, O all-holy Lady, thou wast pleased to reveal thy grace-bearing icon to the humble priest Daniel amid the grass of a meadow and hast glorified it with radiant effulgence and many miracles, that all the faithful may cry out to thee with hymns of praise:

Rejoice, thou who hast given us a rushing torrent of the mercy of God;
 rejoice, thou who hast all-wondrously provided surety of thy maternal care for us!
 Rejoice, thou who amid the grass of a meadow didst reveal thy holy icon to a most reverent priest;
 rejoice, thou who didst illumine it as with rays of the sun;

Rejoice, thou who didst glorify the little town of
 Akhtyrka with great miracles;
 rejoice, thou who hast made its name, hitherto
 unknown, familiar to all the faithful!
 Rejoice, thou who hast spiritually gladdened the
 whole Church of Russia by the appearance of
 thine icon;
 rejoice, thou who hast covered the whole Russian
 land with thy holy protection!
 Rejoice, thou who grantest healings to the faithful
 through thine icon;
 rejoice, thou who putttest the unbelieving to shame
 by thy miracles!
 Rejoice, thou who dost attend unto humble sup-
 plications, quickly hearkening thereto;
 rejoice, thou who dost invisibly comfort the sor-
 rowful sighs of those who suffer and are
 oppressed by grief!
 Rejoice, O thou who art full of grace and prayest
 unceasingly to Christ for us!

KONTAKION IV

A storm of perplexity troubled the priest
 Daniel, who found thy holy icon; yet with fear he
 cried out to thee in supplication, calling upon thee
 to be for him a helper in this life and an aid at the
 hour of his death. Wherefore, imitating him, we
 dare to offer up to thee the same entreaties, O
 Mother of God, and we cry out to Christ God, the
 Master of life and death: Alleluia!

IKOS IV

Hearing in a dream thy command, that he wash
 with water thy holy countenance depicted on the icon
 and adorn it splendidly, O all-pure Virgin, the priest
 Daniel hastened reverently to fulfill thy will; and unto
 thee, who hadst sought him out in thine ineffable
 lovingkindness, he cried out in thanksgiving:
 Rejoice, Mother of the Lord Most High;
 rejoice, for the Lord ever abideth with thee!
 Rejoice, boast of the heavens and help of the
 earth;
 rejoice, subject of the unceasing hymnody of
 the human race!
 Rejoice, thou who lovest the humble of heart;
 rejoice, thou who dost enrich those poor in
 spirit!

Rejoice, thou who dost graciously visit thy
 chosen servants;
 rejoice, thou who in dreams and visions dost
 reveal to them thy will!
 Rejoice, thou who by the radiance of thine icon
 dost dispel the gloom of sin;
 rejoice, thou who by the signs and wonders
 which pour forth therefrom dost make all
 steadfast in the Orthodox Faith!
 Rejoice, guide to salvation for the faithful;
 rejoice, comforter and hope of the penitent!
 Rejoice, O thou who art full of grace and
 prayest unceasingly to Christ for us!

KONTAKION V

Thy holy and wonder-working icon hath been
 shown to be a divinely guided star, O Mistress who
 didst illumine the home of the humble-minded
 priest Daniel with wondrous radiance, so that he
 was counted worthy to receive the power of healing.
 Wherefore, the people, hymning it with faith and
 having had the sign of the Cross made over them
 therewith, received gracious healing, and thus
 chanted praise unto God: Alleluia!

IKOS V

Beholding thee in a dream, appearing in the
 form of an all-comely bride and commanding him
 to give the water used to wash thine icon unto the
 ailing, for them to drink, O all-blessed Virgin
 Mistress, the priest Daniel recognized thee as a
 gracious healer; and having cured a sick woman
 with that water, in compunction of heart he cried
 out to thee:

Rejoice, gracious therapy for those suffering
 amid infirmities;
 rejoice, speedy and full curing of chronic ail-
 ments!
 Rejoice, thou who impartest healing to the sick
 by the mere touch of thy holy icon;
 rejoice, thou who dost raise up the dying sick
 through water and oil sanctified thereby!
 Rejoice, our bold intercessor before thy Son
 and God;
 rejoice, thou who turnest into mercy His wrath,
 which is rightly directed at us!

Rejoice, comforter of those crushed by sorrow;
 rejoice, thou who givest courage unto those
 overcome by grief!
 Rejoice, O our all-holy joy;
 rejoice, O our ineffable gladness!
 Rejoice, all-merciful helper of those in need;
 rejoice, thou who carest tirelessly for the human
 race!
 Rejoice, O thou who art full of grace and
 prayest unceasingly to Christ for us!

KONTAKION VI

The priest Daniel showed himself to be a
 proclaimer of the miracles wrought through thy
 holy icon when he bore thy healing image into the
 temple of God and placed it there, that it might
 remain and be venerated, seen by all to be a grace-
 filled token of thy goodwill toward men; and rejoic-
 ing in it as a treasure given by God, we cry out to
 Christ, the Bestower of gifts: Alleluia!

IKOS VI

Having glorified thy holy icon with the light of
 multifarious miracles and called him who found it
 thy chosen one, O Mother of God, thou didst lead
 him up to the blessedness of paradise by way of
 sorrowful privations and perils; which do thou
 vouchsafe also unto us, O most merciful lady, who
 cry out to thee with faith and love:

Rejoice, thou who leadest the champions of the
 Faith and piety to the mansions of the heav-
 enly Father;
 rejoice, thou who fillest the lack of transitory
 good things with the hope of good things to
 come!
 Rejoice, thou who wastest away the impurity
 of sins with the bitter tears of privation;
 rejoice, thou who by permitting earthly
 sorrows dost reveal the path to the joys of
 paradise!
 Rejoice, thou who makest the meek in spirit
 steadfast in their hope on thee;
 rejoice, thou who makest ready the kingdom of
 heaven for those who are persecuted for
 righteousness!
 Rejoice, thou who dost all-gloriously perform
 miracles through thy holy icon;

rejoice, thou who thereby dost cause wondrous
 signs!
 Rejoice, gracious helper of the servants of the
 Church of Christ;
 rejoice, divinely wise instructress of most rever-
 ent priests!
 Rejoice, confirmation of the Orthodox Faith;
 rejoice, uplifting of the human race!
 Rejoice, O thou who art full of grace and
 prayest unceasingly to Christ for us!

KONTAKION VII

Desiring to glorify thy holy icon all the more
 and to send down rich mercy therefrom upon the
 people, O Mother of God, thou didst wondrously
 hearken to the plea which a certain woman made
 before thine icon in behalf of her dying daughters;
 and didst also appear to the pious Empress Eliza-
 beth, commanding her to rear orphaned girls. And
 we, mindful of thy mercy to the end of our life,
 chant with thanksgiving to the Most High, the
 Father of orphans: Alleluia!

IKOS VII

Fulfilling thy wondrous command, the most
 pious empress both reared young maidens with care
 and herself made haste to worship before thy mi-
 raculous image. There she commanded that a
 magnificent church be erected, where the faithful,
 standing with reverence, might cry out to thee:

Rejoice, thou who dost invisibly rear mother-
 less orphans;
 rejoice, thou who with kindness of heart dost
 care for young and helpless virgins!
 Rejoice, thou who dost embrace the faithful of
 every age with thy maternal love;
 rejoice, thou who dost fulfill heartfelt supplica-
 tions which are for the good!
 Rejoice, gracious confirmation of the land of
 Russia;
 rejoice, magnificent adornment of the holy
 Church!
 Rejoice, Queen of heaven, who receivest rever-
 ent homage from earthly queens;
 rejoice, thou who didst bless as a pleasing
 sacrifice the majestic church offered unto
 thee!

Rejoice, thou who therein dost mercifully accept the supplications of the faithful;
rejoice, thou who hast sanctified it with many miracles!

Rejoice, thou who in an earthly church dost show forth the ineffable beauty of the celestial temple;

rejoice, thou who dost unite the pleading cries of those on earth to the voices of the heavenly hosts!

Rejoice, O thou who art full of grace and prayest unceasingly to Christ for us!

KONTAKION VIII

Strangers and sojourners are we on this earth, which is full of tribulations and sickness, and we are put to the test by the allurements of this world and the assaults of the spirit of evil; but finding thee to be an inexhaustible well-spring of gracious gifts, O Mother of God, we hope to attain the heavenly homeland, crying out to Christ the Lord, the Accomplisher of our salvation: Alleluia!

IKOS VIII

The whole world glorifieth thine all-blessed name and doth reverently venerate the depiction of thy divine countenance, O Theotokos, wherewith thou dost work wondrous miracles throughout the whole world. Wherefore, seeing thy miraculous icon resplendent with rays of miracles like the sun, we cry out to thee with compunction:

Rejoice, for thy name is blessed from the East even unto the West;

rejoice, for all generations magnify thee with reverence!

Rejoice, thou who hast loved Orthodox Russia more than other lands;

rejoice, thou who hast enriched it with thy miraculous icons!

Rejoice, thou who with the splendor of thy miracles dost dispel the darkness of heresies and schisms;
rejoice, thou who leadest the unbelieving to faith by thy rich mercies!

Rejoice, most careful instructress of those zealous for the Faith of Christ;

rejoice, stern reprover of those who fall away therefrom!

Rejoice, thou who dost illumine with the light of divine knowledge those seeking the enlightenment of Christ;

rejoice, thou who dost cast those who blaspheme the Orthodox Faith down into the depths of spiritual retribution!

Rejoice, thou who dost in nowise forsake those who set their hope on thee;

rejoice, thou who dost ever fulfill the supplications of the faithful!

Rejoice, O thou who art full of grace and prayest unceasingly to Christ for us!

KONTAKION IX

All the angelic armies minister unto thee, O Mistress of the world, seeing thee supremely exalted in the heavenly Sion, and with unearthly praises they honor thee with love, and unto God Who alone hath glorified thee they unceasingly cry out: Alleluia!

IKOS IX

Human eloquence is unable to glorify thee as is meet, O Mother of the Lord of the powers on high, and even angelic minds are at a loss how to hymn thee, O Theotokos; yet we sinners, honoring thee with thanks, dare like children to offer thee such hymns as these:

Rejoice, ladder joining heaven and the earth;
rejoice, jar full of the grace of God!

Rejoice, thou who didst clothe the Word of God in the flesh of mortals;

rejoice, thou who gavest birth to Christ the Savior for the world below!

Rejoice, thou who hast been exalted by the name Mother of God;

rejoice, thou who hast been uplifted higher than the heavens!

Rejoice, thou before whom the powers of hades and darkness tremble;

rejoice, thou whom the radiant choirs of the heavenly hosts glorify without ceasing!

Rejoice, gracious sanctification of holy churches;

rejoice, protection and safekeeping of monastic communities!

Rejoice, grace-filled preservation of Christian habitations;
rejoice, sanctification of the whole world!
Rejoice, O thou who art full of grace and prayest unceasingly to Christ for us!

KONTAKION X

Desiring that all the faithful be saved, O Virgin Theotokos, thou dost abundantly pour forth the gifts of the gracious aid upon all who have recourse unto thee, and with thy maternal protection thou dost fend off the wiles and pursuit of the devil from the faithful of every age, who cry out to God: Alleluia!

Ikos X

Thou art a bulwark for virgins, and a protection and defense for all the faithful against enemies visible and invisible, O all-blessed Virgin; wherefore, thou dost never cease to this day to reveal thy goodly help unto us through thy holy image, before which we fall down, crying out to thee in compunction:

Rejoice, thou who dost bless our homes with thine icon;

rejoice, thou who dost hallow our meadows and fields when the sign of the Cross is made over them therewith!

Rejoice, thou who impartest fertility to the soil through the wafting of goodly winds and the dew of seasonal rains;

rejoice, thou who dost abundantly nourish all creation with the compassions of thy Son!

Rejoice, thou who savest our cities and towns from deadly contagion;

rejoice, thou who dost hasten to our aid in time of misfortunes!

Rejoice, for thy maternal supplication can greatly move the Master to kindness;

rejoice, for by thine intercessions are we freed from the threat incurred by our sins!

Rejoice, mighty helper of those departing from this transitory life;

rejoice, excellent ally of the faithful at the dread hour of death!

Rejoice, key to the kingdom of Christ;

rejoice, gate of paradise!

Rejoice, O thou who art full of grace and prayest unceasingly to Christ for us!

KONTAKION XI

We offer thee hymnody of thanksgiving, O all-pure Mistress, for thou hast given us thy much-healing image, whereon we see thee weeping with compunction; for with tears of compunction thou hast even watered the hardened hearts of us, the iniquitous, O most good one, that, cleansed of the defilement of sin thereby, we may be counted worthy to chant with the saints to Christ, God, the King of glory: Alleluia!

Ikos XI

O Mistress, in the Church of Christ thou hast been shown to be a radiant lamp full of the oil of mercy, illumining all the ends of the earth with the light of the true knowledge of God, and leading to everlasting blessedness those who cry out such things as these:

Rejoice, thou who puttest to shame the vain belief of those who oppose the Faith of Christ;

rejoice, thou who by thy miracles dost preserve the purity of the dogmas of Orthodoxy!

Rejoice, guide to salvation for those who have strayed from the right path;

rejoice, thou who dost assist toward repentance and correction those who have fallen into grievous transgressions!

Rejoice, thou who dost cause to dwell in the hearts of inveterate sinners a radiant beam of hope in divine forgiveness;

rejoice, thou who thus dost save their souls from despair and everlasting destruction!

Rejoice, eternal helper of those who proclaim the teachings of Christ;

rejoice, thou who with divine eloquence dost labor with those who preach the kingdom of God!

Rejoice, thou who dost bear the entreaties of the faithful up to the throne of the heavenly King;

rejoice, thou who thyself art always praying for us before thy Son and God!

Rejoice, helper of the world;
rejoice, inexhaustible well-spring of mercies
and compassions!
Rejoice, O thou who art full of grace and
prayest unceasingly to Christ for us!

KONTAKION XII

Thou hast given us thy much-healing image as
a surety of grace, O Mistress, and hastening thereto,
we earnestly beseech thee: Accept the veneration
offered thee before this wonder-working image,
and grant us help and defense amid our tempta-
tions, that unto Christ God, Who hath given thee
so great a power of grace, we may continually cry
out: Alleluia!

Ikos XII

Hymning thy wonders, O all-pure Mother of
God, we proclaim thy mercy toward the human
race; for, lo! many times have we beheld the won-
drous signs of thy lovingkindness which are made
manifest through thy much-healing image, which
transcend our minds of clay, being attainable by
faith alone, and which move the faithful to cry out
to thee:

Rejoice, thou who hast given thy precious
image for our consolation and sanctification
rejoice, thou who thereby hast shown, and dost
ever show, great mercy to thy people!
Rejoice, thou who therein dost reveal an inex-
haustible source of help and healings;
rejoice, thou who dost lovingly receive the
prayers earnestly offered up before it!
Rejoice, thou who by the mouths of thy ser-
vants didst recount this to the sacred council
of the Church of Russia;
rejoice, thou who by the appearance of the icon
hast set a seal upon thy lovingkindness for the
city of Akhtyrka!
Rejoice, thou who teachest us to make the sign
of the cross and bow down before it;
rejoice, thou who thereon dost show us the
saving power of the crucifixion of Christ!
Rejoice, thou who dost stretch forth thy hands
unto our aid;
rejoice, thou who dost open the gates of God's
lovingkindness to all the faithful!

Rejoice, thou who dost entreat the righteous
Judge in our behalf;
rejoice, thou who dost make the faithful worthy
of the kingdom of heaven!
Rejoice, O thou who art full of grace and
prayest unceasingly to Christ for us!

KONTAKION XIII

O most hymned Mother, who without corrup-
tion gavest birth to our Lord Jesus Christ most
sweet, and with great pain didst suffer along with
His saving Passion: Mercifully accept this, our
meager entreaty, which is offered unto thee with
love before thy much-healing image; and by thine
almighty intercession and aid deliver us from tran-
sitory temptations and everlasting torments, that
with all the saints we may be counted worthy, to the
end of our life, to cry out to God our Savior:
Alleluia!

*This Kontakion is recited thrice, whereupon Ikos I and
Kontakion I are repeated.*

Prayer to the All-holy Theotokos

O all-blessed and greatly merciful Mistress of the
world! Behold, gazing upon thy holy icon and
seeing thee depicted thereon, standing in sorrow
and compassion before Christ the Savior Who was
crucified for us, we sinners earnestly beseech thee,
our renowned advocate before thy Son: Forsake us
not on the day of trial and tribulation, but in the
midst of the temptations and perils which befall us,
encircle us with thy most honored protection
against enemies visible and invisible, and grant us
the strength to do the most perfect and good will of
the Creator and Master of the world. For thou, O
our most merciful helper, dost see how much we are
subject to all manner of sins; for we sin not by will
alone, but we unwillingly fall into multifarious
transgressions. Wherefore, we flee unto thee, the
mighty arranger of salvation for Christians, and we
cry out with compunction: Enlighten our minds
with the knowledge of divine Truth; warm our
hearts with the fervor of Christian love and saving
desires; and make our will steadfast in the un-
feigned fulfillment of the commandments of the

Lord. Yea, O most merciful Lady, hearken from the heights of heaven unto the sighs and entreaties of us sinners; heal the diseases of the sick; grant peace to the hearts of the oppressed; give patience to the suffering; instill the fear of God in those who offend; strengthen those persecuted for righteousness; defend the orphans and widows; give comfort to those who weep; ask forgiveness for the repentant; still the demonic tempest of the passions in simple souls; root the meekness and love of Christ in the hearts of those who honor thee; and make them steadfast through the spirit of lovingkindness and compassion. Heretics and apostates, who have fallen away from the Faith, do thou guide to a knowledge of the Truth. And shut the mouths of the ungodly, who blaspheme the Holy Church and mock the Orthodox Faith. O Mother of God, ask forgiveness of sins and a foretaste of everlasting

blessedness for our fathers, brethren and sisters who have departed this life. And when our final hour approacheth, O Mistress, accept our souls and grant them rest in the company of the righteous, where the choirs of the angels and the saints unceasingly glorify the might and mercy of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, and thy maternal help and intercession for us, now and ever, and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

Translated from the Church Slavonic by the reader Isaac Lambertsen, from *An Anthology of Akathist Hymns*, Vol. V (Nizhny-Novgorod: Brotherhood of St. Alexander Nevsky, 1997), pp. 124-141. Copyright © 2010. All rights reserved by the translator. Unauthorized reproduction by any means prohibited. Legitimate copies of the akathist may be obtained from the St. John of Kronstadt Press.

Anything to do with the Church is like an inner, kindling flame, and looking after it is the best work of all. The humblest task in the church, be it only cleaning the floor, is a nobler work than anything else. Do everything with love and reverence in the house of God. Where else is there more gladness than where the Lord dwells, surrounded by the cherubim and seraphim and all the hosts of Heaven!

The soul must be provided with the word of God, for the word of God, as St. Gregory the Theologian tells us, is the bread of angels of which souls partake which hunger after God. Most importantly, one must practice reading the New Testament and the Psalter. By so doing the mind is enlightened and undergoes a divine change.

Too great solicitude for worldly things is natural to an unbelieving and faint-hearted man. And woe to us if we, in taking care of ourselves, do not confirm ourselves in our hope in God, Who takes care for us. If we do not ascribe to Him the visible goods which we use in this present age, how can we expect from Him those goods which are promised in the future? Let us not be such faint-believers, but rather let us seek first the Kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added unto us, according to the word of the Savior.

When it pleases God, says St Isaac the Syrian, to plunge a man into greater afflictions, He permits him to fall into the hands of faint-heartedness. The latter produces in him a strong force of despondency, in which he experiences a straightness of soul, and this is a foretaste of hell. As a consequence of this the spirit of delirium comes upon him, and from it thousands of temptations spring forth: anxiety, rage, blasphemy, complaining about one's lot, depraved thoughts, moving from place to place, and the like. If you ask: what is the cause of this? then I will tell you: your negligence. Because you did not take the trouble to seek a cure for them. For there is one treatment for all this, and with the aid of it a man soon finds comfort in his soul. And what kind of treatment is this? Meekness of heart.

ACQUIRE THE SPIRIT OF PEACE, AND THOUSANDS AROUND YOU WILL BE SAVED.

— *St. Seraphim of Sarov*
1759-1833 AD

WHY CHRISTIANITY SHOULD NOT CHANGE WITH THE TIMES

SAINT THEOPHAN THE RECLUSE

It reached my ears that, as it seems, you consider my sermons very strict and believe that today no one should think this way, no one should be living this way and therefore, no one should be teaching this way. Times have changed!

How glad I was to hear this. This means that you listen carefully to what I say, and not only do you listen, but you are also willing to abide by it. What more could we hope for, we who preach as we were ordered and as much as we were ordered?

Despite all this, in no way can I agree with your opinion. I even consider it my duty to comment on it and to correct it, since even though it perhaps goes against your desire and conviction it comes from something sinful, as though Christianity could alter its doctrines, its canons, its sanctifying ceremonies to answer to the spirit of each age and adjust itself to the changing tastes of the sons of this century, as though it could add or subtract something.

Yet, it is not so. Christianity must remain eternally unchanging, in no way being dependent on or guided by the spirit of each age. Instead, Christianity is meant to govern and direct the spirit of the age for anyone who obeys its teachings. To convince you of this, I will put forward some thoughts for you to consider.

Some said that my teaching is strict. First of all, my teaching is not my own, nor should it be. In this sacred office nobody should, nor even can, preach his own teaching. If I or someone else ever dare to do so, you can put us outside the Church.

We preach the teachings of our Lord, God and Saviour Jesus Christ, of the holy Apostles, and the Holy Church, which is guided by the Holy Spirit. At the same time, we make sure to do everything possible to keep these teachings whole and inviolate in your minds and hearts. Every thought we present and every word we use, we do so very carefully, so as not to overshadow this brilliant and divine teaching in any way. Nobody can act differently.

Such a law, which calls for each man's preaching in the Church to be "God-sent," was established at

the creation of the world, and should thus remain valid until the end of the world. The Prophet Moses, after the delivery of the commandments from God Himself to the people of Israel, concluded: You shall not add to the word which I am commanding you, nor take away from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God, which I command you (Deut 4:2).

This law of constancy is so unalterable that the Lord and Savior Himself, when He was teaching the people on the mountain, said: Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished. (Matt 5:17-18)

Then He gave the same validity to his teaching, before interpreting the commandments in the spirit of the Gospel, by adding: Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven (Matt 5:19).

This means that anyone who wrongly interprets the commandments of God and lessens their validity, will be an outcast in the future life. This is what He said at the beginning of His preaching. He assured the same thing to Saint John the Theologian, the beholder of ineffable revelations, to whom He described the final judgement of the world and the Church, indicating in the Apocalypse (Book of Revelations): I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues which are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book (Apoc. 22:18-19).

From the time of His first appearance in the world until the Second Coming, Christ has given the Holy Apostles and their successors the following law: Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you (Matt 28:19-20).

That means for you to teach, not what anyone else could possibly imagine, but what I ordered, and this to the end of the world. And He adds: And lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Amen (Matt 28:20).

The Apostles received this law and sacrificed their lives in order to keep it. And to those who wanted to keep them from preaching what it was they preached under the threat of punishment and death, they replied: Whether it is right in the sight of God to give heed to you rather than to God, you be the judge; for we cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard (Acts 4:19-20).

This clear law was delivered by the apostles to their successors, was accepted by them, and has timeless effect in the Church of God. Because of this law, the Church is the pillar and the ground of truth. Can you see then what an inviolable steadfastness it has? After that, who would be so bold as to stubbornly disturb or move anything in Christian doctrine and law?

Next listen to what is said of the Prophet Ezekiel who for seven days was in the ecstasy of prayer and after seven days heard the word of the Lord: Son of man, I have made you a watchman to the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth (Ezek 3:17), and he declared to the people: Here is the law for you! If you see a wicked person committing iniquity and you do not tell him: leave your iniquity and change your way, that wicked person shall die for his iniquity, but his blood I will require at your hand (Ezek 3:18). Conversely, if you warn the wicked, and he does not turn from his wickedness, or from his wicked way, he shall die for his iniquity, but you will have delivered your soul. Again, if a righteous person turns from his righteousness and commits injustice, and I lay a stumbling block before him, he shall die. Because you have not warned him, he shall die for his sin, and his righteous deeds that he has done shall not be remembered, but his blood I will require at your hand. But if you warn the righteous person not to sin, and he does not sin, he shall surely live, because he took warning, and you will have delivered your soul (Ezek 3:19-21).

What a strict law! And though it sounds in the consciences of all pastors during their election and

consecration, when a heavy yoke is put on them, namely the instruction of the flock of Christ that He entrusted to them, big or small, not only to guide it but also to preserve it. How could anyone be so bold, to pervert everything in the law of Christ, when this involves the destruction of both pastors and flock?

If the saving power of this teaching depended on our opinion of it and our consent to it, it would make sense for someone to imagine rebuilding Christianity according to human weaknesses or the claims of the age and adapt it according to the sinful desires of his heart. But the saving power of Christian law does not at all depend on us, but on the will of God, by the fact that God Himself established precisely the exact path of salvation. Beyond this there is no other way, nor could it exist. Therefore, anyone who teaches in any other way is deviating from the true path and is destroying himself and you. What logic is there in that?

Notice how strict judgment was mentioned when something similar happened to the nation of Israel during the difficult years of their captivity. Some prophets out of pity for the suffering and sick talked to the people, not as the Lord had ordered, but as their heart dictated. Concerning them the Lord gave the following commands to Ezekiel: And you, son of man, set your face against the daughters of your people, who prophesy out of their own minds. Prophesy against them and say, Thus says the Lord God: Woe to the women who sew magic bands upon all wrists, and make veils for the heads of persons of every stature, in the hunt for souls (Ezek 13:17-18). This means: Woe to those who order any kind of special treatment and suggest such leniency, so no one feels the slightest displeasure, either from those on top or those at the bottom, not caring whether this is for their salvation or destruction, whether it is pleasing to God, or repulsive. Woe to them, because thus says the Lord God: your pillows and veils, namely your candied and comforting teaching, upon which you are perverting souls, I will tear from your arms and I will let their souls that you are perverting go away... (Ezek 13:20-21) from this teaching of yours and I will destroy you corrupters.

This is the benefit of this special treatment and

leniency, such as you want to hear from preachers! When you put all this deep in your heart, it is not right for you to want us to make any concessions in Christian doctrine, having the wrong desire to be pleased by us. On the contrary, you are obliged to persistently demand from us to remain true to doctrine, as strictly and firmly as possible.

Have you ever heard of the indulgences of the Pope of Rome? Here is what they are: special treatment and leniency, which he gives, defying the law of Christ. And what is the result? From all of this, the West is corrupt in faith and in its way of life, and is now getting lost in its disbelief and in the unrestrained life with its indulgences.

The Pope changed many doctrines, spoiled all the sacraments, nullified the canons concerning the regulation of the Church and the correction of morals. Everything has begun going contrary to the will of the Lord, and has become worse and worse.

Then came along Luther, a smart man, but stubborn. He said, The Pope changed everything as he wanted, why shouldn't I do the same? He started to modify and re-modify everything in his own way, and in this way established the new Lutheran faith, which only slightly resembles what the Lord had commanded and the holy apostles delivered to us. After Luther came the philosophers. And they in turn said, Luther has established himself a new faith, supposedly based on the Gospel, though in reality based on his own way of thinking. Why, then, don't we also compose doctrines based on our own way of thinking, completely ignoring the Gospel? They then started rationalizing, and speculating about God, the world, and man, each in his own way. And they mixed up so many doctrines, that one gets dizzy just counting them.

Now the Westerners have the following views: Believe what you think best, live as you like, satisfy whatever captivates your soul. This is why they do not recognize any law or restriction and they do not abide by God's Word. Their road is wide, all obstacles displaced. Their way is broad, all the obstacles taken out. But the broad road leads to perdition, according to what the Lord says. This is where leniency in teaching has led! Lord, save us

from this broad way! But it is better to love each difficulty that the Lord has appointed for our salvation. Let us love Christian doctrines and let us compel our mind with them, pushing it not to think otherwise. Let us love Christian morals and let us compel our will in them, forcing it to lift the light yoke of the Lord humbly and patiently. Let us love all Christian rituals and services which guide us, correct us, and sanctify us. Let us compel our heart with them, encouraging it to convey its desires from the earthly and perishable, to the heavenly and imperishable.

Let us confine ourselves as though in a cage. Or better, let us drag ourselves, as if we were passing through a narrow passage. Let it be narrow, so no one can deviate neither to the right, nor the left. Yet undoubtedly, through this narrow way we will obtain the kingdom of the heavens in return. For as you know, this kingdom is the kingdom of the Lord. The Lord laid this narrow way and said, Follow exactly this route and you will obtain the kingdom of heaven. Could anyone then doubt whether the traveler will get to his destination? And what mind would one have who starts wanting all kinds of annulment of the commandments, when by doing this he would immediately lose his way and be lost?

Once you have fully understood this assertion, do not worry if something in our teaching seems to be strict. The only thing you should strive for is to carefully make sure if it is from the Lord. And after you have made sure it is from the Lord, accept it with all your heart, no matter how strict or obliging it may be. And not only avoid wanting special treatment and leniency with doctrine and the ethics, but even flee from all these, as though fleeing from the fire of Gehenna. Those who cannot escape from this are those who think up such things and with them lure those who are spiritually weak to follow them. Amen.

December 29, 1863; Sunday after Nativity

From the website of the Holy Monastery of Pantokrator (Melissohori, Greece). <http://www.impantokratoros.gr/Christianismos.el.aspx>

AFTER A VISIT TO A MONASTERY

How is it that so many are so faithless? “How,” they ask, “can He send manna from heaven? How can a man raise the dead, or bring forth water from a rock? Why doesn’t He do these things today?”

But He *does!* He really does. I know someone who about five years ago (he was about fifteen at the time) woke up one night feeling he would be sick. He found an icon card of St. John of San Francisco and began asking him for help. An hour later the illness went away, not all of a sudden, but gradually. Nothing else happened; it just went away. This happened on two occasions. Another time his arms were painful. He anointed them with oil from the lamp at Vladyka’s sepulcher in San Francisco and the pain eased up. And another time, this same person had a pain or sore or something; he went to one of the icon lamps at home (before the icon of Christ), took some oil from it, rubbed it into the affected spot, and the problem went away.

I know also a certain family, of which the mother wanted to see England. A decade ago, she mentioned to a visiting priest (if memories are correct) that she wanted to go to England, and he replied, “You will go to England.” Then came 2007, with the terrible submission to the Moscow Patriarchate of so much of our Church. The whole family was quite unsure about what was being called “rapprochement” with “the Mother Church.” (We all know what it really was.) Before that time, they went to confession and came forth feeling as if a great weight had been removed from their shoulders. But (this was in parishes which fell) not long before the submission to the KGB, going to confession no longer produced this effect; they no longer felt the relief of being forgiven.

Similarly, before this terrible time, going to communion evoked fear and trembling in the recipient; but afterwards, this was no longer the case (at least for this family). One might be a little fearful [when approaching], but it was no longer the same.

After two years of praying for guidance, this family finally traveled a long distance to a parish which had *not* fallen — and the atmosphere was the same as it had been at one of the parishes which fell many years before the fall — before it began to fill with wealthy businessmen and people from new calendar parishes.

In their new home, despite its distance, they found that going to confession once again brought that feeling of lightness, freedom and relief they had once known, and going to communion once again evoked fear and trembling and joy beyond description. Truly, they felt, this was the Church, truly the precious Body and Blood of our Most Good Lord, to Whom be praise, honor and glory! Once again they could sing “We have seen the true Light, we have received the Heavenly Spirit, we have found the true Faith. We worship the Undivided Trinity for He hath saved us!”

Not long after, the mother and son finally made their voyage to England. At St. Edward’s Monastery, though it’s not Russian, it was the same as in the parishes across the Atlantic which had not fallen — the same sense of Grace at confession and holy communion. It was again the same at the Annunciation Women’s Monastery, just as sober and joyful.

What a treasure this is! Many desired to see this and have not. Many have rejected It or lost It. Let us not. Let us learn to value It. When the priest comes forth at the great entrance, so do the angels and Christ Himself, invisibly. Let us tremble at this thought! The angels come down to earth. And at the consecration, the Holy Spirit descends, turning the bread and wine into Flesh and Blood, the very Body and Blood of Christ. Let us therefore tremble. Let us lead holy lives, that we may enter worthily the House of God, entreating Him for that. Let us strive to come as often as possible to Him. Let us cleanse ourselves in confession and by fervent prayers before coming to receive Him, His wonderful Body and Blood, this Fire which consumes the unworthy and warms the partakers thereof. Let us strive worthily to partake often, and be at church as often as possible.

An hour’s drive (or even far more), in these days — that’s nothing. God eclipses all that. If the president invited us to supper, we would without fail be there even if we lived in Alaska! But this is *God* — before whom the president is but an ant or a blade of grass. Let us treasure Him. O Lord, glory be to Thee!

— Nicholas LaBarge, summer 2010

OUR VENERABLE FATHER PŒMEN THE GREAT

WHOM THE CHURCH CELEBRATES ON THE 27TH OF AUGUST

Our holy father Pœmen was a native of Egypt. He abandoned his home with all his brethren and became a monk. Their mother in the meantime was bitter at the loss of her children and she went to the Sketis in order to find them. But they shut the door on her and she wept outside and cried in distress. Meanwhile, Abba Anouv, one of the brethren, said to Pœmen: "What shall we do with this old lady?" Pœmen went to the door and asked her from inside: "Why do you weep O elderly lady?" Hearing Pœmen's voice she said: "I only wish to see my boys. How can I harm you if I only see you? Am I not your mother? Am I not at an advanced age?" And Pœmen answered her: "Where do you wish to see us? In this world or the next one?" Their mother knew the meaning of Pœmen's words and she left happily without seeing them.

The governor of that territory wished to see Abba Pœmen one time and he took his nephew, who had committed a number of felonies and cast him in prison, saying, If his uncle Pœmen came forth so that he could see him, he would release the nephew immediately. When Pœmen heard this, he was reluctant to go to the governor. The mother of the captive went to her brother, the righteous Pœmen, and begged him to come to the governor to save his nephew. Pœmen, however, would not even give her a reply. She rebuked him out loud saying: "O unmerciful one, have pity on me. He is my only son and I have no other besides him." Pœmen communicated with her through another monk, saying: "Depart from here at once; for Pœmen never gave birth to any children." Then the governor sent a message to Pœmen: "Say one word and I shall release him." Pœmen replied: "Do as the law requires. And if he deserves to be executed, put him to death. If he is not guilty then do with him

as you wish." The archon marveled at the exactness of the saint's life and released the nephew.

Once someone asked the righteous one: "If I see my brother's sin should I cover it?" Pœmen said: "If we cover the sin of our brother, then God will cover our sin also." This righteous man practiced every known virtue, such that the fathers and ascetics in Egypt and the Thebaïd followed his example and lived according to it, correcting themselves. These were the accomplishments of the thrice blessed one and with these he conducted his life. He lived for many years and at the end was translated to the Lord.

Abba Pœmen achieved such humility that one day he said: "I declare that in the same place where Satan is condemned, I shall go too." And again: "A man shall consider humility and the fear of God as important as the breath that cometh out of his nose." And again: "If a man castigates himself, he will endure anything." About Pœmen they used to say that he never considered his words more important than those of any other elders, but rather always praised that elder. Thus, he never spoke when Abba Anouv was present. The blessed Pœmen was quoted by Saint Anthony as saying: "Man's greatest accomplishment is to admit his mistakes in the presence of God and to always anticipate temptation, even to his final breath."

Evergetinos, our own edition, Vol. I p. 401. See also the same volume p. 395-405. Vol. II p. 371-72.

Translated by Leo Papadopoulos from the *Great Synaxaristes*, Matthew Lagges, publisher; Athens, 1960; Vol. VIII, pp. 466-68.

For a more ample life of St. Pœmen, from St. Dmitry of Rostov, see *Living Orthodoxy* vol. XIII #4 (#76).

VISIT TO HAÏTI

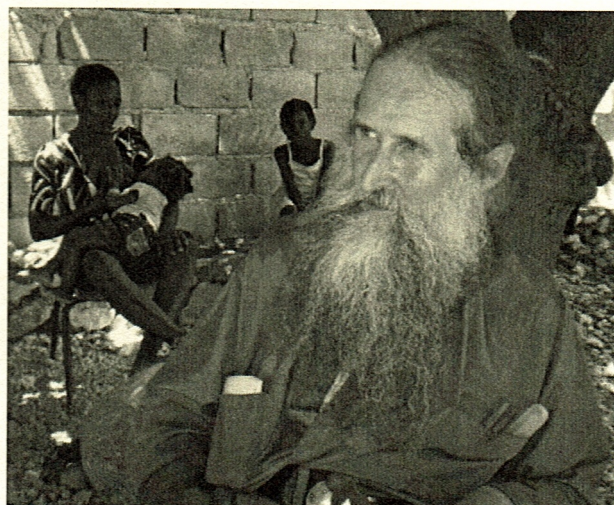
Shortly after the feast of the Exaltation of the Cross, with the blessing of Met. Agafangel, Bishop Ambrose of the Synod in Resistance paid a second pastoral visit to the Mission, for the patronal feast at St. Dorothy's (for the first time with a newly-composed feast in her honor by Br. Isaac Lambertsen). Shortly after Vladyka's arrival, we paid a visit to the community at LaPlaine,



WITH SOME OF THE PARISHIONERS AFTER THE PATRONAL FEAST AT ST. DOROTHY'S

visiting with Fr. Amboise and his family, several parishioners, and inspecting progress on the cloture wall at the "new ground" (cover). Joseph and Juliana's house (below) continues to "recover" from the earthquake — built around the temporary shack (now removed from within), it still awaits a permanent roof.

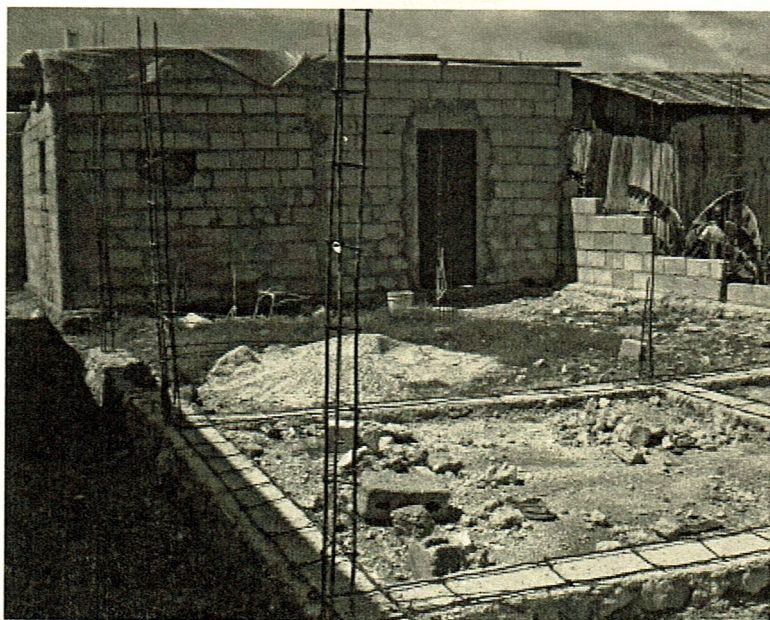
For the weekend, Vladyka and I (Fr. Amboise remained to celebrate at St. Dorothy's) journeyed to St. Augustine's on the south coast (only moderately inconvenienced by residual earthquake damage) in the Mission's newly-acquired Nissan, where Vladyka ordained two new readers, Lucien and Cyprian (next page). St. Augustine's continues with regular readers' services for all Sundays and

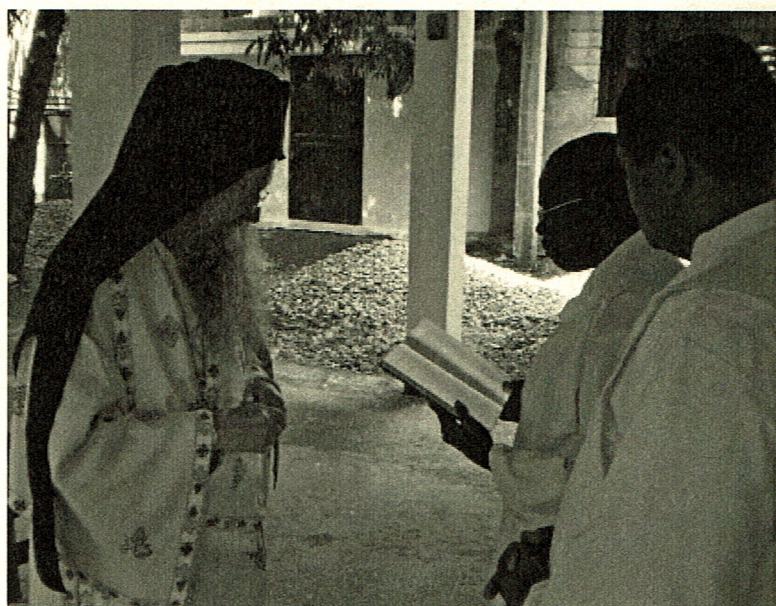


feasts, with Fr. Amboise journeying there about once a month to serve the Divine Liturgy.

Returning to Port-au-Prince after services on Sunday afternoon, we took a "day off" for the most part on Monday before preparing for Vigil and Liturgy for St. Dorothy (a day early, as travel schedules required), when Vladyka ordained yet another reader.

As our work in Haïti continues, I must once again plead for your greatest possible generosity to help these "little ones" of our brethren. The needs are, of course, even greater in the aftermath of the earthquake — and we may only pray that the cholera epidemic will not find its way into the midst of our little flock.





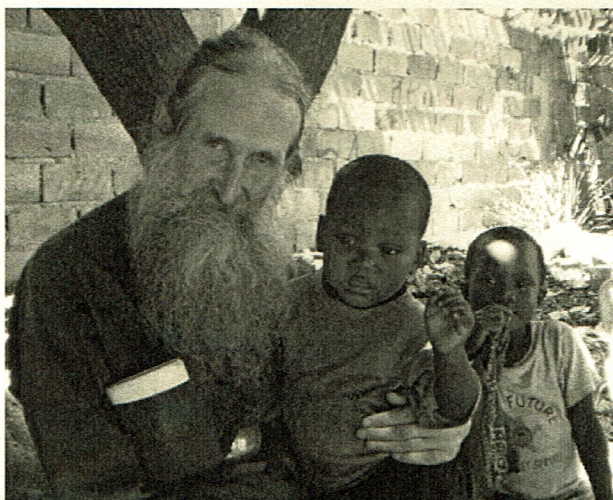
NEWLY-ORDAINED READERS LUCIEN AND CYPRIAN



TONSURE OF A NEW READER AT ST. DOROTHY'S



VLADYKA PREACHES; LUCIEN TRANSLATES INTO CRÉOLE



[] Yes... I want to pledge support for the Haitian Orthodox Mission! Please record my pledge through December 2011 for a contribution of [] \$200 [] \$100 [] \$50 [] other amount (_____) monthly, by [] check or [] MasterCard/VISA (number below). I enclose my first month's pledge for _____. (You may of course choose a dedicated use below if you wish.)

[] Yes... I want to make a one-time contribution toward the expenses of the Haitian Orthodox Mission, in the amount of [] \$1000 [] \$500 [] \$250 [] \$100 [] other amount (_____), for which I enclose my [] check [] MasterCard/VISA (number below). I would like my contribution to be used for [] support of the church-related schools [] assistance for earthquake recovery [] transportation funds for faithful living at long distances from the church [] assistance for Food for Hungry Children (another container coming up!) [] however needed.

Name:

Address:

City/State/ZIP:

Telephone:

MasterCard/VISA number: _____ - _____ - _____ - _____

Expiration date: ____/____

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